

TOWN OF LOS GATOS FAQ

A NEW LIBRARY FOR LOS GATOS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Will the proposed Los Gatos Capital Financing ballot measure impact the new Town library?

- A. The only project in the Town's Adopted Five-Year Capital Improvement Program that could be subject to the proposed ordinance is the library project.

Q: What kind of impacts could the proposed measure have on the library project if the measure is placed on a ballot?

- A. The project could be delayed by up to 12 months, which could increase the total cost of the library project.

Q: Do other cities have a similar restriction on all proposed capital projects over a fixed amount?

- A: To the Town's knowledge, no other municipality in California has this type of restriction.

Q: How will the new library be funded?

- A: There will be no tax increases to pay for the new \$18.4 million library. The library will be funded with existing Town reserves (\$4.4 million) and with Redevelopment Agency (RDA) funds (\$14 million) through a financing method known as Certificates of Participation (COPs). The COP notes are paid back from the revenue generated as the redevelopment area improves. In 2002, the Town Council issued \$10.6 million in COPs financing to pay for downtown improvements, including the renovation of Plaza Park; new sidewalks and streetscape features; parking lots; and reconstruction of N. Santa Cruz, Main St., downtown side streets and alleys.

Q: Shouldn't the Town be using Redevelopment funds to pay for other Town services since the Town faces budget challenges rather than building a library?

- A: By State law, redevelopment funds **cannot** pay for any of the Town's ongoing services, such as park maintenance, street maintenance, public safety, or even library operations. Redevelopment funds can be used to improve public facilities, such as the improvements made previously in the downtown. Community facilities, such as police and fire stations and libraries can be funded by redevelopment. In addition, the Town has a sizeable, separate redevelopment fund for affordable housing production. Also, redevelopment funds must be spent in the redevelopment project area (the downtown and Civic Center area in Los Gatos), with limited exceptions.

Q: Are there other eligible projects the Town could fund with redevelopment funds?

A: The 2002 COP funded many significant improvements in the redevelopment project area. While there are always other projects that could be done, the Council determined that the library project is a priority for the community based on substantial public input.

Q: Shouldn't the Town wait to build the library until the economy improves?

A: The Town has a deadline of December 10, 2011 to issue COPs for redevelopment funds, and to issue COPs, a project must be far enough along to demonstrate that the project is actually going to be built. If the Town does not issue COPs by this date, it will need to adopt a new ordinance setting a later date. Adopting a new ordinance will result in a loss to the Redevelopment Agency of about \$50,000 per year, which reduces the total amount of Redevelopment financing for the library project (or any project) by \$600,000.

Q: How has the community participated in the library project?

A: The community began discussing the need for a new library as long ago as the 1980s. State funding for a new library was sought, but not granted, in 1988. In 2002, the Town began a master planning process for the facilities at the Civic Center in large part to identify the location for a library within the context of all the Civic Center facilities. In addition to the community participation during the earlier efforts, outreach for the master planning process included six focus groups, two community forums, a design charrette, on-line and counter questionnaires, and seven Council meetings. The library was a key focus of many of these efforts. For the library project itself, the Town Council has held five public meetings as well as 3 neighborhood meetings and a community forum.

Q: Have there been any surveys about the need for a new library?

A: Yes, in 2007, a preliminary survey to gauge voter interest in improvements to Civic Center facilities was conducted. The survey indicated that a majority of voters would support a bond measure to build a number of facilities, including a library and that a library was the top priority among potential uses of bond money. The bond amounts noted in the survey were much higher than the cost of the library being planned, and the type of bonds noted would have required an increase in property taxes. The library being planned will not result in a tax increase for residents. In addition, the survey indicated that 70% of the respondents thought the library had a need for additional funding; 75% thought that expanding children's reading areas in the library was important; 69% thought that adding group study areas for students in the library was important; and 78% thought that expanding space for books was important.

Q: How big will the new library be compared to the existing library?

A: The existing library is 13,970 sq. ft. and the new library is expected to be approximately 30,000 sq. ft., which is similar in size to other libraries in the County and the State serving populations comparable to Los Gatos.

Q: Does Los Gatos need a bigger library?

A: The Los Gatos library was built in 1964 when the population of the Town was about 9,000. With a population today of about 30,000 and the high levels of usage (209,000 visits per year and growing), the library does not have sufficient space to meet the needs of the community. The American Library Association and the Pew Foundation have documented through surveys and studies that use of public libraries continues to increase, particularly in the areas of electronic resources, young adult activity, and community gathering purposes.

Q: Will the new library offer any services not currently available?

A: Yes, while the details have not been finalized, it is expected that the new library will have separate space for children's story-telling programs and reading rooms; reading and study areas for students of all ages; computer areas for research, internet access and technology education; more self-check machines; and space for the Town's extensive history collection.

Q: Will the size of the library collection be increased?

A: The new library will have space to accommodate increases in adult and youth book collections and multi-media collections.

Q: Where will the library be located?

A: The new library will be located on the southeast corner of the Civic Center property, adjacent to Pageant Park and against the hillside. This location optimizes the parking capacity at the Civic Center, limits the number of heritage trees that need to be removed, enhances the access to Pageant Park, and minimizes disruption during construction.

Q: Will a garage be built to add parking for the library?

A: No, parking will be accommodated by reconfiguring the surface lots and utilizing parking spaces no longer needed due to the relocation of many police staff to the new Police Operations building on Los Gatos Blvd.

Q: Will the old library continue to be used as a library?

A: No, the existing library space will be converted to other municipal and community uses, potentially to include a community meeting room. Planning for use of the vacated space will occur during the construction of the new library.

Q: Could the Town join the Santa Clara County library system so that the County would pay for a new library?

A: Local communities that are part of the County library system are responsible for building and financing the branches in their communities. Also, residents in areas with County branches pay additional property tax assessments for operation of the library. Thus, Los Gatos residents would be subject to an ongoing increase in property tax assessments, unlike the current situation in which no additional property taxes are levied for the Town's library operation.

Q: Could the Town operate a library jointly with the High School?

A: The collections of the Town and high school are very different, with the Town's 120,000-volume collection serving broad audiences and the high school's 20,000-volume collection supporting the curriculum. The high school recently remodeled its library, which would be too small to serve the community and is not available to the general public due to security issues.

Q: How does the library relate to the Civic Center Master Plan?

A: The Civic Center Master Plan (CCMP) is a long-term planning document identifying options for meeting the public's needs for services over the next 25 to 50 years through existing and/or new public spaces. Space for police services and for library services were identified as the two highest priorities in the CCMP. There is no plan to implement any other part of the CCMP in the foreseeable future. Any implementation of other parts of the CCMP would be undertaken only if the community and Council so desired.

Q: What is the timeline for groundbreaking and opening of the new library?

A: Noll & Tam Architects have completed a conceptual design for the library, and the environmental review and detailed design work are in the initial stages. Although many factors may affect the construction, it is anticipated that groundbreaking will occur in early 2010, with the new library opening in Fall, 2011.

The Library will remain in operation during the construction phase and will close for a limited time to accomplish the move from the old building to the new one.